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Dear Sir/Madam

We write to raise further awareness among the profession regarding equine piroplasmosis, which is common in most regions of the world, and currently endemic in many parts of Europe. Clinical signs of this tick-borne protozoal infection may include pyrexia, anaemia, dehydration and lethargy in acute cases, with milder signs of malaise and reduced performance in the chronic condition. A history of foreign travel, or close contact with imported horses, is also more likely to be present in confirmed cases. The importation of chronically infected asymptomatic horses is possibly the most likely route of entry of infection to the UK and Ireland.

As part of a Horserace Betting Levy Board (HBLB) funded research study looking at the risk of equine piroplasmosis introduction into the UK and Ireland, we would like to put out a request to the readership of The Veterinary Record. We would be very interested to hear from any practising colleagues who have currently or recently had any equine cases in which piroplasmosis was a potential differential diagnosis. In return for anonymised information regarding these horses, we can offer further screening and diagnostic tests to aid in confirmation of disease status. In those horses fitting inclusion criteria for the study, both a free-of-charge PCR test to detect parasite DNA and an ELISA serology screen will be performed at the University of Glasgow and APHA laboratory in Weybridge, respectively. Results will be made available to the referring veterinary surgeon and treated confidentially, with testing of cohorts performed subsequently if required.

In the first instance we would encourage any colleagues interested in assisting with the study to contact Robert Coultous MRCVS via the details at the end of this letter. Further information about the study and about this important disease, as well as contact details, can be found online at the project website www.equinepiro.org.uk.

Yours faithfully,

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